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Open Educational Resources : getting started

A brief introduction for staff wanting to use or create OERs, or to find out more about the OSTRICH OER project at the University of Bath...

What is an Open Educational Resource (OER)?

Although there is no established definition, the following descriptions give an indication of what makes up an Open Educational Resource (OER):

‘Digitised materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research.’ (OECD, 2007)¹

‘OER are teaching, learning, and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use or re-purposing by others.’

(The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2007)²

Learning materials released as OERs can vary in format and content... images, podcasts, course outlines, presentations, websites, entire units of study, standalone learning objects, tests, lecture-capture videos, revision materials, documents, learning designs.

Where have OERs come from?

OERs have their background in the Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) and the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) movements, both of which are based on the principle of freely sharing knowledge.

The term Open Educational Resource was first used in 2002, the same year that [MIT's OpenCourseWare](#) project was launched. Since then, there have been many global initiatives to encourage the release of courses and learning materials for open use. MIT have now released over 2000 courses, OER has taken off internationally and at least 29 projects within the UK have released open learning materials.

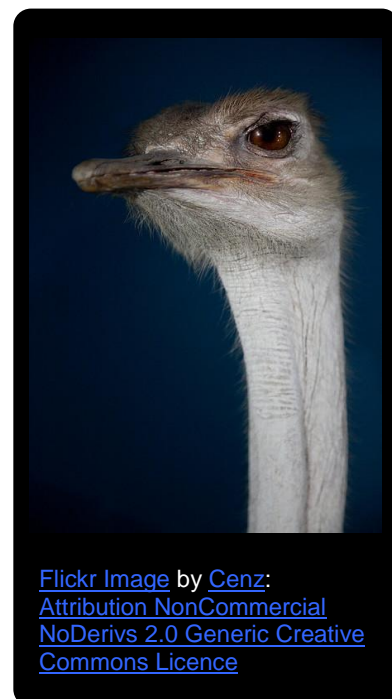
The development of [Creative Commons licences](#) (such as used with the image below) has further promoted OERs, allowing content creators to easily mark their work as available for open use and reuse.

OERs at the University of Bath and other UK HEIs...

The [OSTRICH OER project](#) at the University of Bath is part of a £5million HEFCE-funded programme investigating the release, use and discovery of OERs (managed by the HEA and JISC) and follows the successful Pilot phase [OTTER project](#) at the University of Leicester. OSTRICH will be taking a model for creating and evaluating OERs which was earlier developed by Leicester and adapting it for the University of Bath context.

The creation of OERs in the UK is becoming more common, with many institutions releasing their materials for open access, for example: [OpenLearn](#) at the Open University, [OpenSpires](#) podcasts and the [Ripple](#) project at Oxford University, [OpenExeter](#), [OpenStaffs](#), [BERLiN](#) at the University of Nottingham, [Unicycle](#) at Leeds Metropolitan University.

In the light of these developments, [Jorum](#), the UK national repository for learning and teaching materials, was expanded in 2008 to include [JorumOpen](#). This national HE and FE OER repository is a central point for the global sharing of resources under [Creative Commons](#) licences.



Flickr Image by [Cenz](#):
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Why OER? How might OERs improve teaching and learning...

From an individual perspective:

- You may have an altruistic motivation for sharing based on your individual academic values
- Releasing materials can offer personal visibility and peer recognition within the academic community
- OERs provide the potential for collaboration with academics around the world
- Sharing resources and gaining /giving feedback on materials can act as a stimulus for innovation
- Using content with specified open Creative Commons licences can reduce concerns about the legality of content you use in your materials

From an institutional perspective:

- OERS can provide institutional visibility: as a means of showcasing materials for marketing purposes, or enhancing a University's reputation as a socially responsible institution
- Preparing materials for release as OER can lead to an improved quality of learning materials: OER creation as a stimulus for internal improvement and innovative curriculum development
- The monetary and time costs of producing learning materials can be reduced by sharing and repurposing of materials and so can free up resources for use on curriculum enhancement
- Collaborative models that arise around the creation and reuse of OERs can lead to the development of communities of practice within and across institutions, and within subject-disciplines

Evaluation of OERs:

- [Synthesis and Evaluation Report](#) from the Pilot Phase of the JISC OER Programme
- McGill, L and Currier, S and Duncan, C and Douglas, P (2008) [Good intentions: improving the evidence base in support of sharing learning materials](#). Project Report. (Unpublished)
- [OpenLearn Research Report 2006-2008](#)
- [Evaluating the benefits of OER](#), presentation by Tom Brown (University of Exeter) at the Open Educational Resources International Symposium, July 2010

Find OERS...

[JorumOpen](#) The national repository of UK FE and HE learning and teaching materials

[OpenLearn](#) Open Educational Resources from The Open University

[Xpert](#) University of Nottingham search tool that collates OERs from various sources

[MIT OpenCourseWare](#) Free Online Course Materials from MIT

[OER Commons](#) Teaching and learning resources from around the world

Find out more about OERs...

[OER Infokit](#) created by the Pilot Phase JISC/HEA OER project

[Unesco OER Toolkit](#)

[Stem OER Guidance wiki](#)

The Open University's OpenLearn Unit "[Creating Open Educational Resources](#)"

1. Atkins, Daniel E.; John Seely Brown, Allen L. Hammond (2007-02). "[A Review of the Open Educational Resources \(OER\) Movement: Achievements, Challenges, and New Opportunities](#)". Menlo Park, CA: The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

2. OECD. (2007). "[Giving Knowledge for Free. The Emergence of Open Educational Resources](#)". Paris, OECD Publishing